

Irrigation Canals in the Uinta Basin,  
Highline Canal  
Duchesne Vicinity  
Duchesne County  
Utah

HAER No. UT-30-F

HAER  
UTAH  
7-DUCH.V,  
IF-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Irrigation Canals in the Uinta Basin, Highline Canal

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**Location:** Section 32, T3S, R21E, Sections 5, 6, 7, 18, 19, 29, 32, T4S, R21E, Sections, 4, 5, 9, 10, 15, 14, 13, 24, T5S, R21E, Sections 19, 30, T5S R22E  
Vernal, Uintah County, Utah

**Quad:** Steinaker Reservoir, Vernal NE, Vernal SE, Rasmussen Hollow

**Date of Construction:** c. 1916

**Present Owner:** High Line Canal Company, Ashley Water User's Association  
Vernal, Utah

**Original Use:** Irrigation Canal

**Present Use:** Irrigation Canal

**Significance:** A couple hundred yards downstream from the canal's diversion, the Highline Canal achieves its most significant engineering characteristic of its whole length. An outcrop of sandstone made it necessary for the Highline Canal to go through this sandstone cliff by means of a tunnel, providing it wanted to follow the highest contour on the west side of Ashley Valley. An oral interview with Mr. Morgan Merkley on June 27, 1983 indicated that a man by the name of McConkie [sic] had the contract to build the tunnel around 1915. The tunnel was completed by using picks, hammers, shovels, and dynamite. The canal also goes through a similar tunnel near the canal's crossing with Highway 40.

Although these tunnels are an unique characteristic of canals in the Uinta Basin, it is not felt that they are significant enough to warrant placement on the National Register of Historic Places. The Highline Canal should be considered, however, as potentially eligible.

**Inventoried by:** James Jurale, David Stalheim, Craig Fuller  
National Park Service  
July 1983

### **DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND HISTORY**

The Highline Canal was constructed around 1915, significantly later than the other Ashley Valley canals included in this 1983 survey. Research in Uintah County's Water Certificate Book indicated the following:

In 1914, Don B. Colton granted and released all rights, title and interest to Applications to Appropriate Water numbered 4796 and 4796a to the Vernal Irrigation Company.

In 1920, the Vernal Irrigation Company granted to the High Line Canal Company for the sum of \$65,000 the Highline Canal, including all bridges, headgates and weirs. Also, for another \$5,000, the Vernal Irrigation Company released the right, title and interest to 182 second feet of water (Application No. 4796) to the High Line Canal Company.

Together with the other irrigation companies of the Ashley Valley, the Highline Canal Company took part in the development of the Ashley Creek Reservoir System and was a stockholder in the Ashley Valley Reservoir Company.

The Highline Canal takes its water directly from Ashley Creek, a couple hundred feet north of the Ashley Upper Division, through a concrete and metal headgate. There are four separate gates, each separated by a turnscrew mechanism. Date of construction of this headgate is estimated at c. 1920.

### **REFERENCES**

Assignment of Applications, Don B. Colton to Vernal Irrigation Company, "Water Certificates, Book 1, Uintah County," p. 220.

Warranty Deed, Vernal Irrigation Company to High Line Canal Company, "Water Certificates, Book 2, Uintah County," p. 82-83.

Merkley, Morgan, personal oral interview, June 27, 1983.